



HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH NEWS FLASH

HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH - THE WHITE HOUSE - HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH - THE WHITE HOUSE - HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH - THE WHITE HOUSE - HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH - THE WHITE HOUSE - HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH - THE WHITE HOUSE

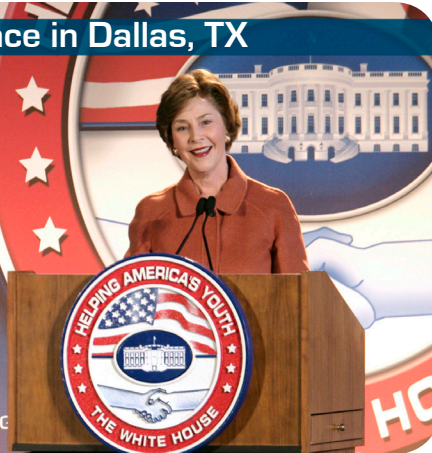
DECEMBER 2007

WWW.HELPINGAMERICASYOUTH.GOV

Helping America's Youth is a nationwide effort, led by Mrs. Laura Bush, to motivate caring adults to connect with youth in three key areas: family, school and community.

5th Regional Conference in Dallas, TX

Mrs. Laura Bush hosted the 5th Regional Conference on *Helping America's Youth* in Dallas, TX, on November 7-8, 2007. You can watch the conference and learn more about the Community Guide to Helping America's Youth online: <http://www.helpingamericasyouth.gov/conf-dbu.cfm>



HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH - THE WHITE HOUSE - HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH - THE WHITE HOUSE - HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH - THE WHITE HOUSE - HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH - THE WHITE HOUSE

**All photographs in this News Flash by White House photographer Shealah Craighead.*

Mrs. Bush Meets with Youth



Andrews Air Force Base, MD. Mrs. Bush hosted a roundtable discussion on the special needs of military youth at Andrews Air Force Base Youth Center on December 5, 2007.



New Orleans, LA. Mrs. Bush visited Good Shepherd Nativity Mission School and highlighted Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Southern Louisiana on November 1, 2007.



Washington, D.C. Mrs. Bush hosted the Ballou High School Marching Band (Washington, D.C.) at the White House to view the documentary *Ballou* on October 11, 2007.

A Caring Adult in Action

Alma Riojas, President and CEO of MANA, A National Latina Organization, has dedicated herself to empowering Latina girls, a youth population that faces significant challenges. Latina girls face increased risks related to education, mental health, early substance abuse, and early childbearing compared to other teen girls.

MANA's Hermanitas ("Little Sisters") program matches Latina girls with mentors who help them avoid risky behaviors and make better choices. They encourage the girls to take pride in themselves, their families and their culture and to stay in school. The girls and their mentors go on museum outings and Girl Scout trips and volunteers hold health workshops that educate girls about teen pregnancy.

This article continued online at www.helpingamericasyouth.gov.



Dallas, TX. Mrs. Laura Bush meets Ms. Alma Riojas, President and CEO of MANA, at the 5th Regional Conference on *Helping America's Youth*.

A Community in Action

A dangerous combination of black tar heroin and nighttime pain relievers, often referred to as "cheese," is taking its toll on Dallas area youth. "Cheese", in combination with other drugs, has contributed to many youth deaths over the last two years, and has increased the number of emergency room visits and the demand for substance abuse treatment for youth in the Dallas area.

Early this year the Greater Dallas Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and other concerned citizens established the Dallas County Cheese/Heroin Task Force. The Task Force, made up of nearly 100 people, is composed of treatment providers, law enforcement personnel, educators, health pro-

fessionals, government officials and other community members. "The number of people on the Task Force tells you about the level of commitment," says Debbie Meripolski, the Task Force's chair.

Using the Strategic Prevention Framework, available through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Task Force developed and is now implementing their strategic plan.

The Dallas Police Department is increasing arrests for heroin distribution. Prevention providers are carrying out an aggressive public awareness campaign. The Dallas Park and Recreation Department is providing activities

for youth in affected neighborhoods. And researchers on the Task Force are making sure that accurate data are collected so the problem can be tracked and understood. As Ms. Meripolski says, "The community's response has been nothing short of miraculous."

Ms. Meripolski is already planning for the future. "My dream is that we'll be able to sustain this really committed, enthusiastic group of people to keep moving forward," she says, "until we've achieved our vision of a drug-free community."

Ms. Meripolski shared her community's experience with other coalitions at the 5th Regional Conference on *Helping America's Youth* in Dallas, TX.

HELPING AMERICA'S YOUTH INITIATIVE PARTNERS

